

“Echoes of the Heart”

Reflections on Life and Community Living

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Stuff we need to be able to talk about. Understandably in life, many of us are averse to reflection or conversation on topics that make us uneasy or tense. It may be some recent conflict in a marriage or with a parent, or perhaps the death of a loved one.

Still, as is always the case in life, there are times when, if we tell the truth about ourselves, there's stuff we need to be able to talk about.

If there's a rising tension in our marriage, we need to be able to talk about it. We need to be able to lay our feelings on the table, in the presence of our spouse, and have adult conversation about what's troubling us.

What is clear is that *burying* the feelings is not a healthy path to venture down. Always, in appropriate ways, these feelings need to be expressed. Expressing them allows us to deal head-on with what is bothering us. On the other hand, ignoring the feelings (trying to act like they don't exist) often times results in anger and resentment building up in our spirit.

In our wider culture, we hear all the time about married couples promising themselves to never go to bed at night angry or upset with the other person. To actually *live this out* can be time consuming and exhausting. Still, it's a healthy practice.

Again, to be healthy human beings, we need to be able to talk about the disappointment or hurt that lingers in our heart.

Talking about our sadness and sorrow. When we've lost a loved one, particularly when we've lost a child, spouse or parent, we need to be able to talk about it freely, as the spirit moves.

One of the things we know about grief is that there's no right or wrong way. It's unique to each person; and each person, therefore, has to discover for themselves what they need. And they need to be able to express this need to others.

From the outset, one of the challenges in grief is that it's a topic that makes people uneasy and uncomfortable. We don't like to think about our dying or the possible death of a loved one. However, when grief comes our way, the feelings are biting and real and much in need of open expression.

It's in this sense that bereavement support groups are so effective in helping people work through their sadness and sorrow when a loved one has died. In a bereavement support group, every participant has lost a cherished loved one. Therefore, there is an implicit level of understanding and compassion that becomes contagious for everyone.

Working our way through it. One of the things we quickly learn in these support groups is that we're not alone. There are others who have experienced similar feelings. Others, too, who have wondered, *am I losing my mind? Am I going crazy?*

In our grief, what happens is that the *deep river* moments of sadness and sorrow come and go. Sometimes, prematurely, we think we are over them. We think we're healed, whole, and well in seemingly every way. And then, boom! Out of nowhere, the rivers of sadness and sorrow pierce our heart once again and we wonder, *what happened?*

What happened is that our grief has its own life-cycle and we had yet to work our way through it.

No doubt, we've all known people who have not worked through the grief of a parent, spouse or child. Often times, they've simply buried it, never wanting to *go there* and uncover the deep-seeded raw hurt left gnawing in their spirit.

Some people live out their lives wounded eternally in this manner. Not that we are ever *the same* after the death of a cherished loved one, but we can—all of us—learn to cope. And *we can* learn to *live again*.

The point is, for all of us—as human beings—there's stuff we need to be able to talk about. There are feelings that run deeply in all of us that we need to be able to unload and unpack. And along the way, the unloading and unpacking bring with them a serenity of spirit that leads us all to higher spiritual ground.